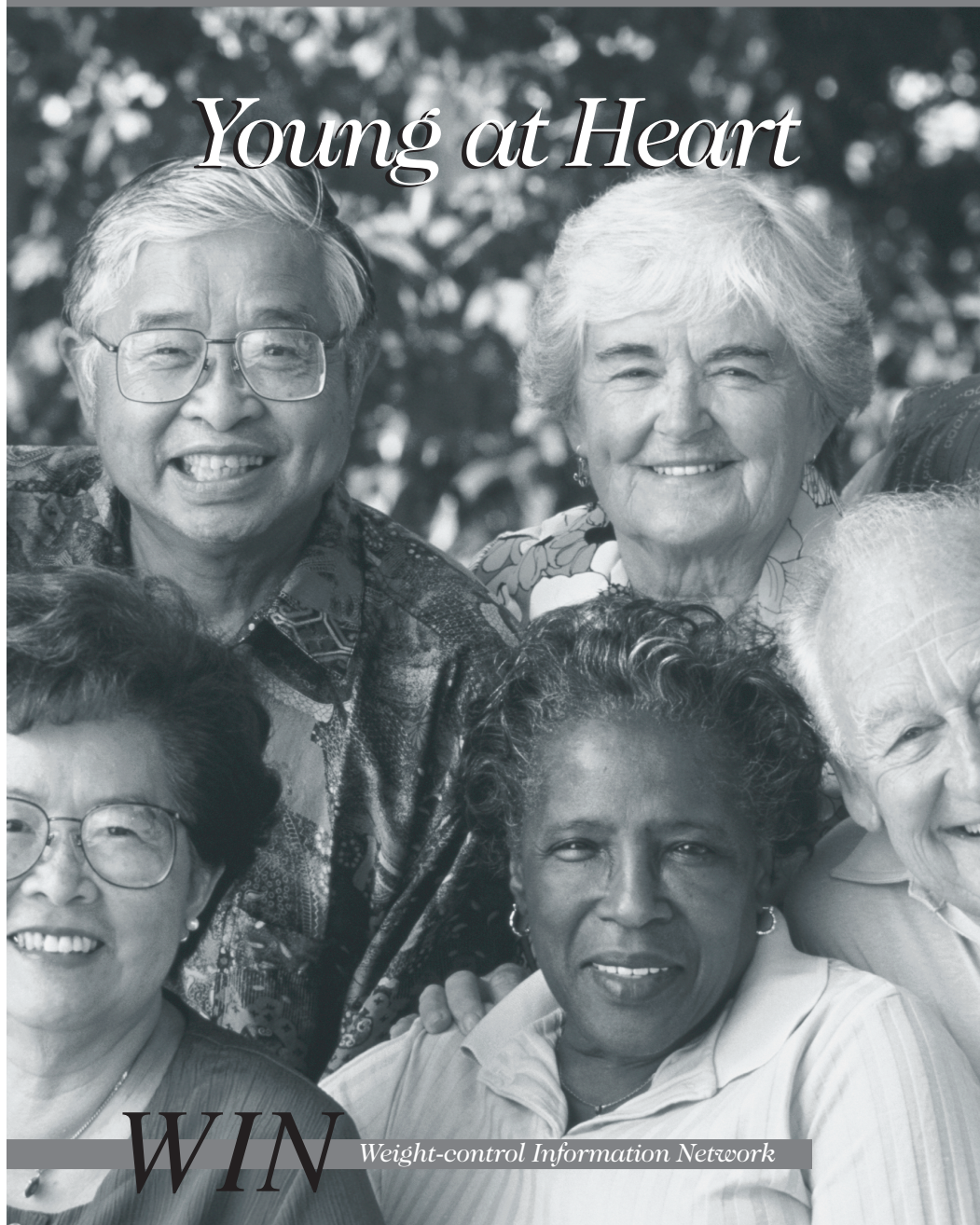


TIPS FOR OLDER ADULTS

Healthy Eating & Physical Activity Across Your Lifespan

Young at Heart



WIN

Weight-control Information Network

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Introduction

Healthy eating and regular physical activity are keys to good health at any age. They can lower your risk for obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and other chronic diseases. They can even help ward off depression and keep your mind sharp as you age. This brochure offers tips and tools to help people aged 65 and over eat well and get active. Talk to your health care provider for more specific advice if you have health problems or concerns. Remember, it is never too late to make healthy changes in your life.



Healthy Eating

What is healthy eating?



A healthy eating plan includes a wide variety of foods. Every day, you should try to eat:*

- 6 to 11 servings of bread, cereal, rice, or pasta. One serving equals one slice of bread, 1 ounce of ready-to-eat cereal (about 1 cup of most cereals), or ½ cup cooked cereal, rice, or pasta.
- 3 to 5 servings of vegetables. One serving equals 1 cup of raw, leafy vegetables or ½ cup of chopped vegetables, cooked or raw.
- 2 to 4 servings of fruit. One serving equals one medium piece of fruit like an apple, banana, or orange; ½ cup of chopped fresh, cooked, or canned fruit; ¼ cup of dried fruit; or ¾ cup of 100 percent fruit juice.
- 3 servings of milk, yogurt, or cheese. One serving equals 1 cup of milk or yogurt,

* Servings and serving sizes are from the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Department of Health and Human Services *Food Guide Pyramid*.

Healthy Eating

1 ½ ounces of natural cheese like cheddar or mozzarella, or 2 ounces of processed cheese like American.

- 2 to 3 servings of meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, or nuts. One serving of cooked meat, poultry, or fish is 2 to 3 ounces; you should eat no more than 5 to 7 ounces a day. One cup of beans, 2 eggs, 4 tablespoons of peanut butter, or $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of nuts also equal one serving.



Healthy Eating

Tips for healthy eating

To help you stay on track with your healthy eating plan, follow these tips:

- Eat breakfast every day.
- Select high-fiber foods like whole grain breads and cereals, beans, vegetables, and fruits. They can help keep you regular and lower your risk for chronic diseases like heart disease and type 2 diabetes.
- Choose lean beef, turkey breast, fish, or chicken with the skin removed to lower the amount of fat and calories in your meals. As you age, your body needs fewer calories, especially if you are not very active.
- Have three servings of low-fat milk, yogurt, or cheese a day. Dairy products are high in calcium and vitamin D and help keep your bones strong as you age. If you have trouble digesting or do not like dairy products, try reduced-lactose milk products, or calcium-fortified orange juice, soy-based beverages, or tofu. You can

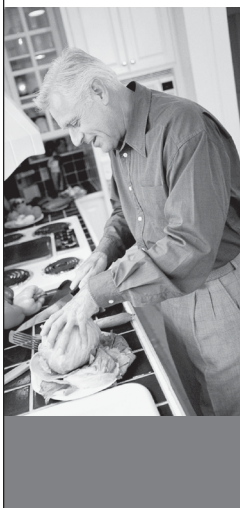
also talk to your health care provider about taking a calcium and vitamin D supplement.

- Keep nutrient-rich snacks like dried apricots, whole wheat crackers, peanut butter, low-fat cheese, and low-sodium soup on hand. Eat only small amounts of dried apricots, peanut butter, and other high-calorie foods. Limit how often you have high-fat and high-sugar snacks like cake, candy, chips, and soda.
- Drink plenty of water. You may notice that you feel less thirsty as you get older, but your body still needs the same amount of water. Aim for eight to ten 8-ounce glasses of water, unless your health care provider tells you to drink less because you have heart or kidney problems. Water-based beverages like milk or juice count towards your daily amount of water.



Healthy Eating

Planning and preparing your meals



It is easier to eat well when you plan for your meals and make them enjoyable. Try these tips:

- Grocery shop with a friend. It is pleasant and can help save you money if you share items that you can only use half of, such as a bag of potatoes or head of cabbage.
- Cook ahead and freeze portions to have healthy and easy meals on hand for days when you do not feel like cooking.
- Keep frozen or canned vegetables, beans, and fruits on hand for quick and healthy additions to meals. Rinse canned veggies and beans under cold running water to lower their salt content. Look for fruit canned in juice or light syrup.
- Try new recipes or different herbs and spices to spark your interest in food. Set the table with a nice cloth and even a flower in a vase to make mealtime special.
- Eat regularly with someone whose company you enjoy.

Healthy Eating

If you are unable to cook for yourself, find out about a community program in your area that serves meals or delivers “Meals on Wheels.” Call the Eldercare Locator at 1-800-677-1116 for information on the program nearest you.

Check with your health care provider

If you have a problem eating well, such as trouble chewing or not wanting to eat, talk to your health care provider or a registered dietitian. They can give you specific advice on following a healthy eating plan. Check with your dentist about caring for your teeth or dentures and your gums.



The death of a loved one or moving from your home of many years may affect your desire to eat. Talk to your health care provider if events in your life are keeping you from eating well.

Ask your health care provider if you should take a daily multi-vitamin/mineral supplement. No pills have been proven to “stop aging” or

Healthy Eating

“improve your memory.” Taking a “one-a-day” type, however, can help you meet the nutrient needs of your body every day.



What is a healthy weight?

Ask your health care provider about a healthy weight for you at your next appointment. If you start to gain or lose weight and do not know why, your health care provider can tell you if this change is healthy for you.

Health risks of being underweight

- Poor memory
- Decreased immunity
- Osteoporosis (bone loss)
- Decreased muscle strength
- Hypothermia (lowered body temperature)

If you are underweight, you may not be getting enough nutrients. Talk to your health care provider about the best way to gain weight and meet your nutritional needs.

If you are underweight, overweight or obese, you are more likely to have certain health problems.

Health risks of being overweight or obese

- Type 2 diabetes
- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol
- Heart disease and stroke
- Some types of cancer
- Gallbladder disease

If you already have one or more of these diseases, ask your health care provider if a modest weight loss (5 to 10 percent of your body weight) could help you feel better or need less medicine.

Do not try to lose weight unless your health care provider tells you to.

Physical Activity

Tips for safe physical activity

Physical activity is good for your health at every age. If you have never been active, starting regular physical activity now can improve your strength, staying power, and flexibility. Being active can help you live on your own for a longer time and lower your chance of getting type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and colon cancer. Whatever activity you choose, follow the safety tips below:

- Ask your health care provider about ways you can safely increase the amount of physical activity you do now.
- Take time to warm up, cool down, and stretch.
- Start slowly and build up to more intense activity.
- Stop the activity if you feel pain.
- Drink plenty of water.
- When you are active outdoors, wear lightweight clothes in the summer and layers of clothing in the winter.

Physical Activity

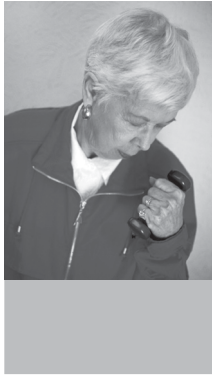
- Wear sunscreen, sunglasses, and a hat for sun protection.
- Wear shoes that fit well and are right for your activity.

Getting active

To get started, pick an activity you enjoy. Begin with small, specific goals such as “I will take a 10-minute walk three times this week.” Slowly increase the length of time and the number of days you are active.



Physical Activity



You can benefit most from a combination of aerobic, strength, balance, and flexibility activities. Build up to 30 minutes or more of aerobic activity on most days of the week. Try to do balance and flexibility activities daily as well. Work toward doing strength exercises on 2 or 3 days a week.

Regular aerobic activity can help you to:

- Lose or maintain your weight by burning calories
- Lower your risk of heart disease and stroke by strengthening your heart and lowering your blood pressure and cholesterol
- Keep your joints moving and reduce your arthritis pain
- Lower your stress and boost your mood
- Have more energy
- Meet new friends by joining a class or walking group.

Aerobic activities

- Walking
- Swimming
- Housework or gardening
- Active play with children

Physical Activity

Doing strengthening activities regularly can help you to:

- Keep your muscles and bones strong as you age
- Increase your strength and independence
- Reduce your need for a cane
- Reduce the risk of bone fractures and other injuries, or recover faster if you are injured
- Maintain or lose weight because muscle burns more calories than body fat.

Strengthening activities

- Lifting weights
- Push-ups or sit-ups
- Household or garden tasks that make you lift or dig

Doing balance activities regularly can help you to:

- Stay steady on your feet
- Avoid falls

Balance activities

- Walking heel to toe in a straight line
- Standing on one foot
- Standing up from a chair and sitting down again without using your hands

Physical Activity



Doing flexibility activities regularly can help you to:

- Maintain the movement of your muscles and joints
- Prevent stiffness as you age
- Prevent injuries
- Lower your stress.

Many activities give you more than just one benefit. For example, doing chair aerobics using hand weights gives you aerobic and strengthening benefits. Yoga combines balance, flexibility, and strengthening benefits. You do not have to do four separate types of activities each week. Choose what

you like to do and round out your activities from there. Remember, any amount of physical activity you do is better than none.

Flexibility activities

- Stretching
- Yoga

Physical Activity

Work physical activity into your day

There are plenty of ways to be active without setting aside a special time for “exercise.”

The tips below can help you to add more activity into your everyday life.

- Take short walks throughout your day. Try a 10-minute walk before breakfast, at lunchtime, and after dinner.
- Ride your bike to visit a friend who lives nearby.
- Clean your house or garage, or wash your car.



Physical Activity

Be good to yourself

Due to loss of loved ones, health problems, trouble paying bills, or other reasons, many older people feel lonely, sad, or stressed in their daily lives. Feelings like these can cause you to lose energy, not feel like doing anything, not eat enough, or overeat. Being good to yourself can help you to cope with your feelings and improve your energy level, eating habits, and health. Here are some ideas for being good to yourself:



- Get enough sleep.
- Stay connected with family and friends.
- Join a walking group, or other social group.
- Surround yourself with people whose company you enjoy.
- Volunteer or get active with groups in your community.

Physical Activity



- Try a part-time job at a place you would enjoy working for a few hours a week.
- Watch a funny movie and laugh.
- Take up a hobby such as playing cards, gardening, cooking, or dancing.

Remember, it's never too late to improve your eating plan, be more physically active, and be good to yourself for a healthier life.

Additional Reading

Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and
U.S. Department of Health and Human
Services (DHHS), 2000.

Phone: 1-888-878-3256.

Website: www.usda.gov/cnpp

Eating Well as We Age.

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA),
2000.

Phone: 1-888-463-6332.

Website: [www.fda.gov/opacom/lowlit/
eatage.html](http://www.fda.gov/opacom/lowlit/eatage.html)

*Exercise: A Guide from the National
Institute on Aging.*

The National Institute on Aging (NIA), 1998.

Phone: 1-800-222-2225.

Website: www.nia.nih.gov/exercisebook

Exercise: The Key to the Good Life.

The President's Council on Physical Fitness (PCPF), Accessed July 6, 2001.

Website: www.fitness.gov/activelife/pepup/pepup.html

Fit and Fabulous as You Mature.

Weight-control Information Network (WIN), 2001.

Phone: 1-877-946-4627.

Website: www.niddk.nih.gov/health/nutrit/nutrit.htm

Weight Loss for Life.

Weight-control Information Network (WIN), 2000.

Phone: 1-877-946-4627.

Website: www.niddk.nih.gov/health/nutrit/nutrit.htm

Resources

Administration on Aging

Eldercare locator: 1-800-677-1116;

Website: www.aoa.gov

American Association for Retired Persons

Phone: 1-800-424-3410;

Website: www.aarp.org

The American Dietetic Association

Consumer Nutrition Information Hotline:
1-800-366-1655;

Website: www.eatright.org

Food and Nutrition Information Center, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Phone: (301) 504-6409;

Website: www.nal.usda.gov/fnic

**National Heart, Lung,
and Blood Institute**

Phone: 1-800-575-9355;

Website: *www.nhlbi.nih.gov*

National Institute on Aging

Phone: 1-800-222-2225;

Website: *www.nia.nih.gov*

**The President's Council on
Physical Fitness**

Phone: (202) 690-9000;

Website: *www.fitness.gov*.



Weight-control Information Network

1 WIN WAY

Bethesda, MD 20892-3665

Phone: (202) 828-1025

FAX: (202) 828-1028

Toll-free number: 1-877-946-4627

Email: WIN@info.niddk.nih.gov

Internet: www.niddk.nih.gov/health/nutrit/nutrit.htm

The Weight-control Information Network (WIN) is a service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases of the National Institutes of Health, which is the Department of Health and Human Services' lead agency responsible for biomedical research on nutrition and obesity. Authorized by Congress (Public Law 103-43), WIN provides the general public, health professionals, the media, and Congress with up-to-date, science-based health information on weight control, obesity, physical activity, and related nutritional issues.

WIN answers inquiries, develops and distributes publications, and works closely with professional and patient organizations and Government agencies to coordinate resources about weight control and related issues.

Publications produced by WIN are carefully reviewed by both NIDDK scientists and outside experts. This publication was also

reviewed by Tamara Harris, M.D., M.S., Chief, Geriatric Epidemiology, National Institute on Aging; Steven Blair, P.E.D., Director of Research, Cooper Institute; and Yvonne Jackson, Ph.D., Director, Office for American Indian, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian Programs, Administration on Aging.

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This publication is also available at www.niddk.nih.gov/health/nutrit/nutrit.htm.

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Healthy Eating & Physical Activity Across Your Lifespan

Young at Heart



- ☐ **Eat breakfast every day.**
- ☐ **Select high-fiber foods like whole grain breads and cereals, beans, vegetables, and fruits.**
- ☐ **Have three servings of low-fat milk, yogurt, or cheese a day. Dairy products are high in calcium and vitamin D and help keep your bones strong as you age. Or take a calcium and vitamin D supplement.**
- ☐ **Drink plenty of water. You may notice that you feel less thirsty as you get older, but your body still needs the same amount of water.**
- ☐ **Ask your health care provider about ways you can safely increase the amount of physical activity you do now.**
- ☐ **Fit physical activity into your everyday life. For example, take short walks throughout your day. You do not have to have a formal physical activity program to improve your health and stay active.**
- ☐ **Get enough sleep.**
- ☐ **Stay connected with family, friends, and community.**



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National Institutes of Health



NIDDK

National Institute of Diabetes and
Digestive and Kidney Diseases

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